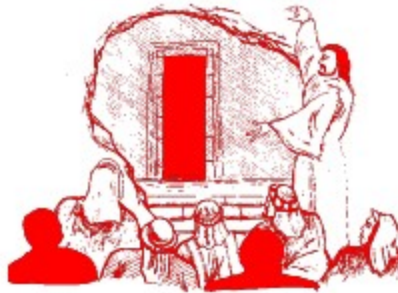


Tribute to The Life and Memory of David Burdette



OPENING PRAYER

O Lord our God and Father, enable us to claim the ministry left behind by David Burdette, your son and our friend and brother in Christ. Help each of us to envision our own lives as lives of dedication to your service, just as David consecrated his life to your service. Give us grace to live our days in such a way that our lives and our deaths may be precious in your sight. You have given and now You have taken from us. But even in our grief and pain, we continue to call You “Blessed.” We offer our thanks for giving us the life of this dear soul and for the gift of many memories. Most of all, we thank You for the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We offer our thanks in Christ’s name, Amen.

OPENING REMARKS

Today, we have gathered to reflect upon the loss of one of God’s children—David Burdette. David entered this world of sin and sorrow on July 6, 1936 and received his welcome into his eternal abode with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit on November 7, 2006. David reached his threescore and ten years. Today we celebrate and honor the life and memory of David Burdette. Earlier this year, David suffered a stroke. As a result of this stroke, David could no longer walk or talk. He endured pain on a daily basis. Fortunately, God made death an escape valve to shake off a life of eternal agony and pain. God does not view death in the same way that humanity views death. Isaiah, who wrote about 739 BC, addressed the death of the righteous. God spoke the following words through Isaiah’s pen: “The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil.² Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death” (**Isaiah 57:1-2**). God in His mercy designed death as a means of escape from a life that is completely hopeless, especially a life of excruciating pain.

One can hardly read these arresting words without reflection upon the words found in **Psalms 116:15**. These words, too, shock the sensibility, or emotional response, of

the reader: “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” God does not view death in the same light as men and women look at death. One other example about the death of a good person is found in the Book of Kings. The author of First Kings tells the story of Jeroboam, whose son was extremely ill. Jeroboam sent his wife to Ahijah, God’s prophet, to inquire if his son, Abijah, would live. The prophet told the wife, “No.” What is striking about God’s reason for allowing the boy to die staggers the imagination: “because he is the only one in the house of Jeroboam in whom the Lord, the God of Israel, has found anything good” (**I Kings 14:1-14**). God allowed the death of Jeroboam’s son in order to spare him from the evil that God intended to bring upon Jeroboam’s household for his wickedness. In spite of the loss of my brother, I am thankful to God for allowing him to die in order to spare him from untold suffering. My brother’s death was precious to God, even though we mourn his passing.

A DEATH FELT BY ALL

What has happened is indeed sad, but, at the same time, there is rejoicing that David is no longer suffering from the excruciating pain that he endured for several months. Fortunately, God in His wisdom designed death as a means of escape. Death was his getaway from pain and his entrance into the very presence of God. We may never really understand the agony that he endured for so many months. Yet, the important thing is that we can learn from his affliction of how to continue to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, without wavering in our faith in the sovereignty of God. His death can also reveal to each of us what we need to know about ourselves, about God, and about life. David, like the rest of us, had a body of flesh and bone. Being flesh, he was not perfect in the flesh, which is true of us all. We have all sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. Even though the flesh is often times extremely weak, nevertheless, God is still cognizant of our make-up. The Psalmist expresses it this way:

Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath. ³⁹ He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return (**Psalm 78:38-39**).

“He remembered that they were but flesh,” reflects the tender mercies that God exhibits in spite of our frailties. One can hardly reflect upon **Psalm 78** without recalling the words of Jesus to Nicodemus:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, ^f that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son (**John 3:16-18**).

THE REMOVAL OF THE STING OF DEATH

David Burdette understood that he was a sinner, and, at the same time, he knew that only redemption in and through Christ was his only hope of eternal life. As one

reflects upon David's suffering, one is conscious that the final enemy that everyone meets is Death. Yes, Death is inevitable, ruthless, and final. Death confronts everyone with the stark reality that one's earthly life is transient, or short-lived. It is in this regard that James, our Lord's brother, penned: "What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (**James 4:14**). The author of the Book of Hebrews expresses it this way: "Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment (**Hebrews 9:27**). Job singled out the brevity of life this way: "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. ²He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure" (**Job 14:1-2**). Yet, having said this, Job then asked the question that confronts all humanity: "If a man dies, will he live again" (**14:14**)? The answer is yes! Job answered: "I know that my Redeemer^c lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.^d²⁶ And after my skin has been destroyed, yet^e in^f my flesh I will see God; ²⁷I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me (**19:25-27**)!"

IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Faith in the immortality of the soul and in a life after death can be traced to the beginning of human history. Daniel (605 BC), too, wrote about life after death: "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" (**Daniel 12:2**). John the Baptist also gave this testimony: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (**John 3:36**). Martha, a dear friend of Jesus, struggled with the harsh reality of death and responded to Jesus' statement about Lazarus' death—"Your brother will rise again" (**John 11:23**)—with the following comments: "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (**11:24**). Jesus then responded by cutting away all underbrush about life after death: "I am the resurrection and the life, He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this" (**11:25**)? David Burdette still lives! Why? He believed in Jesus for redemption.

Jesus and the Sadducees

There are some today who do not believe in the after life of the dead. Some religious leaders in Jesus' day also denied the resurrection of the dead. Jesus confronted the Sadducees who denied the resurrection of the dead with a statement from the Old Testament concerning life after death: "But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ³² 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'^a? He is not the God of the dead but of the living" (**Matthew 22:31-32**). Abraham died almost 2000 years prior to the Incarnation, but, according to Jesus, he is still alive. Moses had been dead almost 1500 years prior to the coming of Jesus in the flesh, but, he, too, was still alive. Do you wish to conquer death? Remember, the finality of death is conquered in and through Jesus. David Burdette, my fleshly brother as well as my spiritual brother in Christ, is now clothed with an imperishable body; yes, he exchanged his mortal body with immortality.

As a result of this change of clothes, one can now say: "Death has been swallowed up in victory," and this victory over the "sting of death" is "through our Lord

Jesus Christ” (1 **Corinthians 15:54, 57**). Nothing but redemption in Christ meets the “sting of death.” It is through Christ upon the Cross that one finds the amazing wonder of God’s forgiveness and eternal life. God’s act of deliverance comes from beyond history, and, at the same time, it is given in terms of history—God becomes flesh. God’s redeeming action is witnessed in the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus. This action on the part of God is David’s victory over the sting of death.

ETERNITY IN THE HEARTS OF MEN AND WOMEN

We who are here today to pay our respect to David are aware that life on this planet points beyond itself. Since God has set eternity in the hearts of men and women, individuals are conscious of life beyond the grave. Solomon, the son of David, writes about eternity dwelling within the hearts of men and women. He writes: “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end” (**Ecclesiastes 3:11**). God’s claim upon men and women is written into the very constitution of their being. Even though one may refuse God’s call, nevertheless, one cannot escape it. One can no more escape this inner consciousness than one can escape his or her humanity. Both men and women acknowledge not only that there is something, but at the same time, both recognize that something ought to be. Individuals cannot help looking for an eternal meaning and an eternal reason or ground of one’s being. Only mankind has spirit, which distinguishes humanity from the animal kingdom. It is human beings that create culture, not animals—animals do not inquire into the nature of truth. While, in some sense, men and women are physically akin to animals, yet they are still spiritually different—eternity set in their hearts. When men and women look on themselves as animals, they become animals. The uniqueness of men and women is related to their creation in God’s image.

It goes almost without saying that if there is no belief in eternal life beyond the grave, there is no real meaning to this life. Men and women cannot escape the realization of something beyond the grave. Eternity is embedded in the hearts of men and women. Death is a constant reminder that everyone, eventually, fades as a leaf in spite of all the rich and varied adventures of life. David Burdette lived his “threescore and ten” years. Moses, in one of his psalms, goes right to the very heart of life’s brevity: “The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span^a is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away” (**Psalms 90:10**).

DAVID’S HOPE: NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST

As I think about the life of David and his faith in Jesus, I cannot help but recall the words of Paul in the Roman letter: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (**Romans 8:1**). David was washed in the blood of the Lamb. Just as God said to the Israelites in Egypt, “when I see the blood, I will pass over you” (**Exodus 12:13**), so it will be for those who have put their faith in Christ. God, too, says to every individual who has been washed in the blood of the Lamb, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” Yes, David was washed in the blood of the Lamb of God. It is my belief that when a person dies in Jesus Christ that death cannot rob one of eternal life. What kind of love is the love of God in Jesus Christ? For Paul, an ambassador of Christ, God’s love is full of assurance. Paul expresses God’s love this way:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Romans 8:38-39**).

This is an exciting truth. David rejoiced in this truth. Nothing can separate us from God's love. No matter how difficult the circumstances may be, God's love is still there. This message is written for those who wish to hear a message from God's Word that our hearts need, especially in the death of a loved one. God never turns His back upon His children. His love is an everlasting love. I do not believe that God will let David down—or let him go. One day Christ will reunite His people and there will be a great reunion. All of us will one day be reunited with him in the ceaseless ages of eternity. Paul, too, speaks of the great reunion to the Christians at Thessalonica:

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. ¹⁴ We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage each other with these words (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**).

DAVID'S LIFE IN CHRIST NOT IN VAIN

David Burdette cannot return to us now, but one day we shall go to him. For the present, he is enjoying God's love and grace, just as we are experiencing God's love. It is this love that links our hearts together until we meet again. In our hearts, we still hurt. We still feel the loss, even though we know that David is better off in heaven. Heaven should not be just a destination that we aspire to go to someday, but rather heaven should be a motivation. In other words, God's people should build their whole lives on the vision of greater glory. David did this! David's life in Christ was not in vain, even though his life was very brief on earth—seventy years. David relied upon the words of Paul to the Corinthians: "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (**1 Corinthians 15:58**).

MINISTRY OF COMFORT

Just as Jesus did more than send a message of comfort to Mary and Martha at the loss of their brother Lazarus, so Jesus traveled to Bethany and stood by the grave and wept. Today, just as then, the bereaved still need the ministry of comfort. The church family at the New Covenant Fellowship seeks to give the ministry of comfort to David's family and friends. We are to comfort one another. The words: "mourn with those who

mourn” ([Romans 12:15](#)) is a vital ministry among God’s people. These words of comfort have focused on the beauty of David Burdette’s life and how it had been exemplified in his life during his ministry as a disciple of Jesus. It is never wrong to weep when loved ones are taken from us. If David Burdette could speak to us from the grave, he, no doubt, would encourage his brothers and sisters in Christ and all his family to put their trust in the One who gives eternal life.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the following question confronts everyone here today: Is there any eternal word of deliverance for the sufferers, for sinners, and for those enduring the agony of bereavement? Yes! Jesus is God’s answer. Today we are again reminded that ultimately life is swallowed up in death. Is there any redeeming hope from the Word of God that enables us to rejoice with joy unspeakable in spite of death? Yes, in Jesus, one sees the glory of God in that death is swallowed up in victory. In Jesus, the sting of death is taken away. If one is not in Jesus, the sting of death is still there. In Jesus, God brings in the new age—the power of the eternal world. This is the wonder of Christianity. In Christ, God brings together eternity and time, He brings together heaven and earth, He brings together the infinite and the finite, and He brings together Himself and humanity. The hope of eternal life comes from outside ourselves, namely Jesus.

Remember, humanity is differentiated from the animal kingdom. One thing that separates the animal world from the world of humanity is death. If one wishes to raise the beast to the level of humanity, it would be necessary to give to the animal world the idea of death, which they do not possess. Why are we here today to grieve over the passing of David, and, at the same time, to celebrate David’s homecoming? It is because we believe in God, in Christ, and the Holy Spirit. We believe that there is life after death. As we finish our remarks to the life and memory of David Burdette, we are reminded that death teaches us of the reality of sin and the necessity of being born again. Our time upon earth is very short. Death is the great leveler—all equally turn to dust. The reality of death should remind each of us of the sovereignty of God. Moses writes: “You turn men back to dust, saying, ‘Return to dust, O sons of men’” ([Psalms 90:3](#)). Death, again and again, should be a constant reminder of the frailties of humanity. Again, Moses captures man’s frailties:

For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. ⁵ You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning— ⁶ though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered ([90:4-6](#)).

CLOSING PRAYER

Our Father, we need a source of strength and refuge. We need a resting place. We offer our thanks to you for being this kind of help in the time of trouble. Bless the memory of David Burdette. We pray that David’s death will not be in vain. Father, help each of us to think upon the changes that occurred in his life because of his faith in Jesus as the savior of the world. We know that life is a mystery; we know that for now we all see through a glass darkly. Help us as we seek and search for answers to so many problems in life. Grant us the peace and comfort that comes from trusting in you. We pray this prayer in

the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen!

^fOr *his only begotten Son*

^cOr *defender*

^dOr *upon my grave*

^eOr *And after I awake, / though this body has been destroyed, / then*

^fOr */ apart from*

^aExodus 3:6

^aOr *yet the best of them*